

with whatsoever its licentiousness could devise or dare. These abuses of an institution so important to freedom and science are deeply to be regretted, inasmuch as they tend to lessen its usefulness and to sap its safety; they might, indeed, have been corrected by the wholesome punishments reserved and provided by the laws of the several States against falsehood and defamation; but public duties more urgent press on the time of public servants, and the offenders have therefore been left to find their punishment in the public indignation.

Nor was it uninteresting to the world, that an experiment should be fairly and fully made, whether freedom of discussion, unaided by power, is not sufficient for the propagation and protection of truth? Whether a government, conducting itself in the true spirit of the Constitution, with zeal and purity, and doing no act which it would be unwilling the whole world should witness, can be written down by falsehood and defamation? The experiment has been tried. You have witnessed the scene. Our fellow-citizens have looked on cool and collected. They saw the latest source from which these outrages proceeded. They gathered around their public functionaries; and when the Constitution called them to decide by suffrage they pronounced their verdict honorable in those who served them, and consolatory to the friend of man, who believes that he may be trusted with the control of his own affairs.

No inference is here intended that the laws, provided by the State against false and defamatory publications, should not be enforced; he who has time renders a service to public morals and public tranquillity in reforming these abuses by the salutary coercions of the law. But the experiment noted to prove that, since truth and reason have maintained their ground against false opinions, in league with false facts, the press, confined to truth, needs no other legal restraint. The public judgment will correct false reasoning and opinions, on a full hearing of all parties; and no other distinction can be drawn between the inestimable liberty of the press and its demoralizing licentiousness. If there be still hits which this